Itinerary for a Chaperone-Led Tour

Life in a Seaport Town

How to Use This Guide:
Even though interpreters are present in most exhibits, we recommend that teachers and chaperones employ strategies of “guided exploration” to arrive at conclusions to the questions listed below. By exploring the exhibits and reading labels rather than simply asking for answers from museum staff right away, students tend to interpret the information in a deeper and more integrated way. Some exhibits are quite small. To make the most of your exploration, the exhibits can be visited in any order.

The village at Mystic Seaport Museum provides many opportunities for comparisons between 19th century life and today. During the latter part of the century, advancing technology brought many changes and improvements. Harbors were open gates to and from the rest of the world, shipping out products from the hinterland and importing needed goods to American shores.

The Enduring Understanding:
Coastal communities were the international entry and exit points in America for new ideas, people, products and technology. Seaport towns had symbiotic relationships with their ships and the people who worked aboard them.

Buckingham-Hall House (Building #41)
Most of our village shows what life was like in the 1870s. This farmhouse shows life as it was in the 1830s when things were still being done the “old” way. How has technology changed since then?

- Guess what the stone steps and curb-side posts were for as you approach the house.
  * Climbing onto and hitching horses!
- Go upstairs and look at the beds. Talk with your team about reasons for the curtains hanging from the bedposts - how many can you think of?
  * Privacy, light blocker, noise reducer – but most of all to keep the heat in.
- Go into the kitchen and look around. What’s different from your kitchen at home?
  * You probably have running water and electricity, for starters!
- As you walk through the house and its yard, discuss with your team what chores each family member might have had in 1830.
  * Bringing in water, washing, cooking, baking, laundry, taking care of livestock, gardening, general housekeeping, clearing land...
- What are the functions of the two outbuildings near the kitchen garden?
  * A privy (outdoor bathroom) and wood shed for storage.

The Mystic River Scale Model (#7)
This detailed model gives you an idea of what the Mystic River area looked like in the 1800s. Notice that the village you’re exploring today is not there! This area was the George Greenman and Co. Shipyard. Find the three Greenman homes by listening to the narration and reading the labels.

- Observe what industries are in town.
  * Hint: shipbuilding was a big one.
- What kinds of ships and boats are in the Mystic River?
  * Schooners, square riggers and steam vessels.
Find downtown and the bridge crossing the river. See if you can locate the current bridge when you leave the building.
Can you find the present location of Mystic Seaport? It’s on the model, but small!

It’s there. Look for a tiny horse.

**Drug Store (#30)**
The druggist or apothecary was useful to those who lived in the community and to those who went to sea as well.
- Go up the ramp and look at the bottles of colored water in the window. Did they serve the same purpose as the carved Native American in front of Stone’s Store?
  
  Yes – they were advertisements.
- Inside, look over the counter at the wooden chest full of small medicine bottles.
- Imagine being on a whaleship. The captain as your doctor and this chest is his only supply of medicine. Discuss the illnesses or injuries that could happen on a ship. How effective do you think these medicines could be?

  Unfortunately, medical care aboard ships was extremely primitive. Imagine an amputation with no disinfectant or pain medication and you get the picture.

**School House (#39)**
The School House gives you a chance to observe changes in education over hundreds of years.
- Compare the size of this schoolhouse with the one you go to. This is the one-room schoolhouse of America’s past, where students from kindergarten to 8th grade learned together. Discuss the pros and cons of this type of schooling.
- Can you determine what the teacher’s blackboard is made of?
  
  Wood, painted black.
- Standard education as we know it today was often not available to all children and schooling was not mandatory. Imagine what your life would be like if you never went to school.

**Stone’s Store (#38)**
The village store represents a small neighborhood store in the 1870s. It carries a limited number of items used in households of the time. Shopping was quite different compared to supermarket shopping today!
- After shopping, how would you get the goods home?
  
  The shopkeeper might have a delivery boy, but usually you would have to carry things yourself. Baskets came in handy.
- How would a shopkeeper advertise his wares?
  
  Posters/prints, trading cards, shop windows.
- Without electricity and consequently without refrigeration, how was food kept from spoiling?
  
  The cheese wheel covered by the glass is a good example. The glass helped keep some of the air away from the cheese, slowing the spoiling.
- Can you find products which were imported from far-away places?
- What was expensive at the time? Less expensive?
- What items/products are still available to us today?
- Can you trace the evolution of modern technology of today? (Ex.: coffee grinder.)

**Burrows House (#28)**
This 1870s house is small but comfortable. It was moved here from downtown Mystic.
- What kinds of workers might have been able to afford to live in this house?
This would be a typical home for a middle-class family of the 1860s.

- Look in the kitchen. What “modern conveniences” made meal preparation easier than in the Buckingham-Hall House?
  
  *A cook stove, a water pump in the pantry, a wringer for laundry…*

- Besides keeping house and taking care of the family, what extra skills did Mrs. Burrows use?
  
  *Mrs. Burrows was a milliner (hat maker). Look in the little room off of the kitchen.*

### Learn More About Coastal Communities in These Exhibits:
- Bank (#31)
- Chapel (#40)
- Fire Engine (next to #23)
- Thomas Greenman House (#45)

### Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canopy</td>
<td>curtains used as a cover over a bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apothecary</td>
<td>one who prepares compounds for medicinal use</td>
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<td>Outbuildings</td>
<td>buildings that are separate from the main house but used by it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wringers</td>
<td>an appliance used to press water from wet laundry</td>
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### Further Reading

Conway, Celeste. *Where is Papa Now?*

Foster, Mark. *Whale Port.*

Kalman, Bobbie. *Historic Communities* series.